

What is claimed is:

Sub  
21

1. A method for confirming that a recipient of an information-bearing notification has received and read the notification comprising:

3 receiving the information-bearing notification from a sender of the notification;

4 presenting the information-bearing notification, including a presenting a word

5 sequence, to the recipient;

6 accepting an audio input in response to presenting the word sequence;

7 determining whether the accepted audio input includes the recipient speaking the

8 presented word sequence; and

9 if the accepted audio includes the recipient speaking the presented word sequence,

10 transmitting a confirmation to the sender of the notification.

1 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising determining whether the

2 accepted audio input includes the voice of an intended recipient, and transmitting the

3 confirmation to the sender if the accepted audio both includes the recipient speaking the

4 presented word sequence and the accepted audio includes the voice of the intended

5 recipient.

1 3. The method of claim 1 wherein presenting the word sequence to the

2 recipient includes presenting a graphical representation of the word sequence.

1 4. The method of claim 3 wherein presenting the graphical representation of

2 the word sequence includes presenting said graphical representation on a display.

1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein presenting the word sequence to the

2 recipient includes presenting an audible representation of the word sequence.

1 6. The method of claim 5 wherein presenting the audible representation of

2 the word sequence includes playing a stored audio recording of the word sequence.

0972551.013091

1           7.     The method of claim 5 wherein presenting the audible representation of  
2 the word sequence includes applying a speech synthesis algorithm to the word sequence  
3 to form the audible representation.

1           8.     The method of claim 5 wherein presenting the audible representation of  
2 the word sequence includes transmitting the audible representation over a telephone  
3 network and accepting the audio response includes receiving the audio response over the  
4 telephone network.

1           9.     The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether the accepted audio  
2 input includes the recipient speaking the word sequence includes applying a speech  
3 recognition algorithm to the accepted audio input.

1           10.    The method of claim 9 wherein applying the speech recognition algorithm  
2 includes computing a resulting word sequence from the audio input and determining  
3 whether the audio input includes the recipient speaking the word sequence includes  
4 comparing the resulting word sequence to the word sequence of the notification.

1           11.    The method of claim 9 wherein applying the speech recognition algorithm  
2 includes time-aligning the word sequence of the notification and the audio input.

1           12.    The method of claim 9 wherein applying the speech recognition algorithm  
2 includes computing a match score characterizing a similarity between the word sequence  
3 and the audio input.

1           13.    The method of claim 12 wherein determining whether the audio input  
2 includes the recipient speaking the word sequence includes comparing the match score  
3 with a threshold score.

Q1  
1 14. The method of claim 1 wherein accepting the audio input includes  
2 accepting a plurality of segments of the audio input each associated with a different part  
3 of the word sequence of the notification, and wherein determining whether the accepted  
4 audio input includes the recipient speaking the word sequence includes determining  
5 whether each of the plurality of segments of the audio input includes the recipient  
6 speaking the associated part of the word sequence.

1 15. The method of claim 14 wherein presenting the word sequence includes  
2 presenting each of the different parts of the word sequence in turn and accepting the  
3 audio input associated with that part before presenting another of the different parts.

09772651-013001  
1 16. A method for forming a contract between a first party and a second party  
2 comprising:  
3 offering terms of the contract to the second party, including presenting a word  
4 sequence to the second party;  
5 accepting an audio input from the second party in response to offering the terms  
6 of the contract;  
7 determining whether the accepted audio input includes the second party speaking  
8 the presented word sequence;  
9 informing the first party if the audio input includes the second party speaking the  
10 word sequence.

1 17. The method of claim 16 wherein determining whether the accepted audio  
2 input includes the second party speaking the presented word sequence includes applying  
3 a speech recognition algorithm to the accepted audio input to determine a word sequence  
4 present in the audio input.

1 18. The method of claim 16 wherein determining whether the accepted audio  
2 input includes the second party speaking the presented word sequence includes applying  
3 a speaker recognition algorithm to the accepted audio input to compare voice  
4 characteristics of an intended party with whom the first party desires to form a contract  
5 and voice characteristics present in the audio input.

1 19. The method of claim 16 wherein offering the terms of the contract  
2 includes display a text representation of the terms to the second party on a computer  
3 display.

1 20. Software stored on computer readable media for causing a computer  
2 system to perform functions including:  
3 receiving an information-bearing notification from a sender of the notification;  
4 presenting the information-bearing notification, including a presenting a word  
5 sequence, to the recipient;  
6 accepting an audio input in response to presenting the word sequence;  
7 determining whether the accepted audio input includes the recipient speaking the  
8 presented word sequence; and  
9 if the accepted audio includes the recipient speaking the presented word sequence,  
10 transmitting a confirmation to the sender of the notification.

1 21. The software of claim 20 wherein the software further causes the  
2 computer system to perform functions including determining whether the accepted audio  
3 input includes the voice of an intended recipient, and transmitting the confirmation to the  
4 sender if the accepted audio both includes the recipient speaking the presented word  
5 sequence and the accepted audio includes the voice of the intended recipient.

1 22. An automated notification confirmation system comprising:  
2 means for receiving an information-bearing notification from a sender of the  
3 notification;  
4 means for presenting the information-bearing notification, including a presenting  
5 a word sequence, to the recipient;  
6 means for accepting an audio input in response to presenting the word sequence;  
7 means for determining whether the accepted audio input includes the recipient  
8 speaking the presented word sequence; and  
9 means for transmitting a confirmation to the sender of the notification if the  
10 accepted audio includes the recipient speaking the presented word sequence.

1           23.     The automated system of claim 22 further comprising means for  
2 determining whether the accepted audio input includes the voice of an intended recipient,  
3 and means for transmitting the confirmation to the sender if the accepted audio both  
4 includes the recipient speaking the presented word sequence and the accepted audio  
5 includes the voice of the intended recipient.  
6

1

09772651-013001